

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Fiscal Year 2007

Introduction

It has been an incredible year. First, I had the great honor to be selected to be the Town Manager for the wonderful Town of Amherst. I was both gratified and humbled by the honor and I intend to move forward with energy and commitment. Second, I am privileged to follow Barry Del Castilho, Town Manager, and John Musante, Interim Town Manager. Their leadership served Amherst well; each left the Town in excellent condition. It is important that I acknowledge their significant contributions to Amherst. I hope to be able to perform up to the high standards each has set.

First Year Achievements

I spent a good part of last year engaged in meeting and speaking before civic organizations, neighborhood groups and institutional community members. I spoke to the Chamber of Commerce, Amherst Club, Rotary Club, Amherst Women's Club, the League of Women Voters, Amherst Historical Society and Promoting Downtown Amherst organization. I met with the representatives of the Amherst Survival Center, the Amherst Housing Authority, the Amherst Community Television and the Jones Library Board of Trustees. I met with the Jeffrey Lane citizens' group, the Lincoln/Sunset citizen's group, the Shays Street citizen's group, an informal group of builders and developers, the Council on Aging, the Board of Health, the Human Services consortium and the Longmeadow citizens' group. I met frequently with Chancellor Lombardi of the University and President Marx and President Hexter of Amherst College and Hampshire College, respectively. I met with the various chairs of the Town's boards and commissions. I developed a relationship with Amherst department heads and employees to learn of their challenges and to assess their considerable talent. Finally, I met with scores of citizens. Each organization, group or individual had a story to share with me about their devotion to the Town and how the community might be improved. I learned a great deal about the issues before the community, and that base of information will serve as the platform to achieve solutions to the challenges before us.

I also engaged and stimulated the community to discuss the many opportunities and challenges associated with economic development. I encouraged the creation of a partnership with the Town of Hadley and the University of Massachusetts Amherst to identify resources and to outline how University assets might be employed to assist with economic development. The first joint meeting with the Town of Amherst Select Board and Town of Hadley Selectmen took place to discuss economic development and the need for a regional perspective to this important issue. Amherst's relationship with the University and Hadley continues to grow positively. I also appointed a new interim Town Counsel, Gary Brackett, to replace Alan Seewald.

My management style incorporates a respect for process review. Simply put, process review means the comprehensive analysis of the systems that provide services to the community. With the terrific cooperation of the department heads and staff, we were able to complete a comprehensive study of a number of processes. First, an analysis of the fire and ambulance

revenue and expense was completed. That review yielded the understanding of the gross and net cost per call, the relationship between the fees being paid by the participating towns and the costs of those services, the amount of time it takes to respond to calls, the number and amount of time when multiple ambulance calls were taking place and the difference in average call time based upon origin of the call. That research allows for the beginning of the conversation with the University and the participating towns as to what an appropriate amount might be to compensate Amherst. Second, a comprehensive analysis of water consumption over the last four years was conducted to develop new policy in response to the dramatic drop in usage that occurred as a result of UMass conservation efforts. That same process has been applied to the permit and inspection process, emergency management and recreation programs sponsored by LSSE.

Activities

The administration performance highlights from last year included the following:

- reorganized the Cherry Hill Golf Course operation
- reorganized Veterans' Services Office
- reorganized the budgetary process
- reorganized the Permit and Inspection process
- established the groundwork for the Strategic Partnership Agreement with UMass
- resolved the Jeffrey Lane/Common School parking lot debate
- guided and supported the Survival Center transition
- reorganized the Human Rights/Human Resources operation
- reorganized the Citizen Activity recruitment and committee management
- completed comprehensive review of fire/ambulance cost, call and performance
- completed comprehensive review of water and sewer usage and trends
- led the effort to prepare an Emergency Operation Plan update
- led the effort to create a new Police Mutual Aid Agreement with UMass.

Conclusion

I look forward to working with the Select Board, Town Meeting, department heads, employees and the citizens of Amherst towards building a better community over the next year. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Laurence Shaffer
Town Manager